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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5297  
INFO RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 1407  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1230  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL  
RUCOWCV/CCGDSEVEN MIAMI FL//OLE/OI//

UNCLAS PORT AU PRINCE 000266

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR  
DRL  
S/CRS  
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR  
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)  
TREASURY FOR MAUREEN WAFER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL EAID XM XL HA VE  
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ COMING TO HAITI?

¶1. This message is sensitive but unclassified -- protect accordingly.

¶2. (SBU) The Haitian Media on February 2 reported that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez planned to visit Haiti as early as the following week. However, the foreign ministry's political director, Wiener Jean Baptiste, on February 5 pointed out to Poloff that the reports stemmed from an announcement made by Venezuelan Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Rodolfo Sanz in Caracas on January 22, who promised that Haitians "will soon see President Chavez in Haiti." The Haitian foreign ministry is making no arrangements and has no knowledge of a set date for the visit, according to Jean Baptiste. Deputy Secretary General of the Presidency Raymond Jeanty also told Pol Specialist that the presidency had no knowledge of a Chavez visit.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: In March, 2006, prior to President Preval's inauguration, President Preval told visiting WHA A/S Shannon that Chavez was pushing a visit to commemorate the bicentennial of Venezuelan flag day on March 12 in Jacmel. (Venezuelan General Francisco de Miranda first flew the Venezuelan flag on his vessel in Haiti's Jacmel harbor.) Preval told A/S Shannon he would do his best to avoid Chavez, and the visit did not occur. Since Preval's inauguration, however, Haitian-Venezuelan relations have warmed considerably. Preval signed a Petrocaribe agreement within his first weeks in office, and he has made clear that he will solicit aid from any country willing to contribute. Haitian officials report that Chavez continues to aggressively court Haiti. Jean Baptiste noted that Sanz also announced a Venezuelan donation of five garbage trucks and one tanker as part of "operation pure air for Haiti," which he attributed to Chavez' earlier remarks to GoH officials that Venezuela owed a "historic debt to Haiti." (Simon Bolivar in 1816 successfully appealed to the first Haitian president, Alexandre Petion, for assistance in his fight for independence.) Preval may well soon issue an invitation to Chavez, possibly centered on the March date. End Comment.

SANDERSON